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ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU  
DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN

SENSITIVE  
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E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [SOCI](#) [AU](#) [UNSC](#) [SU](#)  
SUBJECT: AIR OPERATIONS UNDER UNAMID SUFFER TRANSITION PAINS

REF: KHARTOUM 1839

¶1. (SBU) Summary: The UN has agreed to allow Canadian-financed helicopter contractor Skylink to provide air support to UNAMID until March 31, 2008. However, in a change from AMIS operations, the UN prohibits UN personnel to use Skylink aircraft resulting in large numbers of UN personnel waiting for transportation. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) Canadian political officer Tara Lawrence told poloff on January 3 that the UN approved on January 2 the use of Canadian-financed contractor Skylink until March 31, 2008. The Canadians, who provided funding for AMIS air transport through the contractor Skylink, offered in fall 2007 to continue funding air transport for UNAMID (reftel). Lawrence said that when Troop Contributing Countries (TCC) do finally provide helicopters, the UN and Canada have agreed to proportionally reduce the use of Canadian-financed helicopters. For the time being, UNAMID has use of Skylink's 25 MI-8 helicopters and two fixed wing aircraft. The UN has eight helicopters but not all are available for flight operations given lack of Sudanese certification for the aircraft.

¶3. (SBU) According to an internal Skylink communication provided to poloff, there is considerable command and control confusion as UNAMID begins operations. Skylink said that under UN command there are delays in obtaining essential documents causing delays and inefficiencies. In addition, the UN is unable to obtain required flight clearances into JEM-controlled areas resulting in the failure to resupply UNAMID camps at Tine, Genaina, Umm Barro, Sari Fumra and Kulbus.

¶4. (SBU) Skylink also revealed that despite the decision to use the Canadian-funded service, whereby AMIS personnel were transported by Skylink, with the transition, UN personnel are prohibited from flying on Skylink aircraft. As a result, "several hundred" UN troops and personnel are still waiting to be transported to various locations. Skylink said the Chief of Integrated Support Services (CISS) is attempting to resolve the issue but that there is "considerable acrimony at UNAMID HQ given the rather abrupt stop to current operations."

¶5. (SBU) Comment: The UN is apparently making policy decisions without first examining the likely effect on its ability to deploy personnel and maintain its logistical supply chain. While the lack of key personnel, perhaps made worse by a holiday exodus, may not have helped the situation, in fairness, DPKO expected to have command of its own TCC helicopters by now. We expect delays of this kind as UNAMID struggles in an extremely complex environment.

POWERS